

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-02 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 /072 W
-----000149 251813Z /43
R 250901Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8697

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, SHUM, TH
SUBJECT: RTG DISMISSAL OF TWO LABOR LEADERS FOR POLITICAL
ACTIVITIES

REF: (A) BANGKOK 00783 (B) BANGKOK 02391

1. ACTING IN HIS CAPACITY AS REGISTRAR FOR LABOR UNIONS UNDER LABOR RELATIONS ACT OF 1975, RTG DEPARTMENT OF LABOR DIRECTOR GENERAL WICHIT SAENGTHONG HAS DISMISSED AMAD KHAMTHETTHONG AND SAWAD LUKTOD FROM POSITIONS AS PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF STATE RAILWAY OF THAILAND LABOR UNION FOR ALLEGED UNAUTHORIZED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. CAUSE FOR DISMISSAL WAS ROLE WHICH AMAD AND SAWAD PLAYED IN ORGANIZING AND CIRCULATING PETITION REQUESTING RTG GRANT AMNESTY TO FORMER VICE PRESIDENT OF MTROPOLITAN WATER WORKS UNION AROM PHONGPHANAGAN AND OTHER DEFENDANTS IN THAMMASAT 18 TRIAL (SEE REFTTEL A). ACCORDING TO WICHIT, THE AMNESTY PETITION WENT BEYOND LIMITS OF LEGITIMATE LABOR UNION ACTIVITIES AS SPECIFIED IN LABOR RELATIONS ACT OF 1975 AND ITS CIRCULATION TO GENERAL PUBLIC CONSTITUTED UNAUTHORIZED POLITICAL ACT.

2. COMMENT: WICHIT'S JUSTIFICATION FOR DISMISSAL ASIDE, PM KRIANGSAK WAS REPORTEDLY VERY UPSET BY AMNESTY PETITION, WHICH
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HE VIEWED AS UNCALLED-FOR PUBLIC CRITICISM BY LABOR LEADERS OF HIS POLICY. DISMISSAL ACTION PRESUMABLY DESIGNED TO PUNISH RINGLEADERS AND DEMONSTRATE LIMITS OF NEW RTG'S TOLERANCE. LABOR LEADERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN LABOR CONGRESS OF THAILAND, ARE ANGRY OVER RTG'S DISMISSAL ACTION, WHICH THEY VIEW AS THREAT TO INDEPENDENCE OF ALL LABOR LEADERS. LCT LEADERS PLAN TO MEET JANUARY 25 TO PLAN STRATEGY. IF NOTHING ELSE, DIS-

MISSAL ACTION MAY END HONEYMOON PERIOD BETWEEN LABOR LEADERS
AND NEW RTG. RTG ACTED HARSHLY IN DISMISSING AMAD AND SAWAD
AND THUS RISKS ALIENATION OF FAVORABLY DISPOSED LABOR LEADERS.
ON OTHER HAND, TIMING OF PETITION DURING SENSITIVE BEHIND THE
SCENES DISCUSSION ON THAMMASAT 18 CASE MUST HAVE SEEMED
PARTICULARLY INOPPORTUNE AND PROVOCATIVE TO RTG.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONNEL SEPARATIONS, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO02528
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780037-0689
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780126/aaaaavvc.tel
Line Count: 69
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9ed6a1e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BANGKOK 783, 78 BANGKOK 2391
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3719842
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RTG DISMISSAL OF TWO LABOR LEADERS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
TAGS: ELAB, SHUM, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9ed6a1e0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014